

July 31, 2006

A. G. Kawamura
Secretary of Agriculture
California Department of Agriculture
Sacramento, CA 958145

Secretary Kawamura

Agriculture is an essential California industry. The California Department of Agriculture and the California Agricultural Commissioners Association are dedicated to protecting and promoting agriculture. Invasive species are an ever-present, relentless threat to agriculture and our ability to produce renewable natural resources. Pest prevention activities are essential to inhibit the spread of exotic pests and to ensure we have a sustainable agricultural industry in California.

Combating invasive noxious weeds is problematic because of several factors. First, funding is inadequate. Many counties have resorted to grant funding which is unreliable, making consistent and sustained weed program impossible. Second, weed infestations on federal land are often left untreated because appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation has not been completed. The current method of writing an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement for a forest, or district within a forest, is a cumbersome process, and it is just not working.

The Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) infestation in Siskiyou County is a good example of how the NEPA process inhibits pest prevention activities. Much of the Leafy spurge infestation is on public land. There has been no NEPA authorization and therefore, no treatment. This invasive pest has now infested at least 60 miles of the Scott and Klamath Rivers. Agricultural land in Siskiyou County and Humboldt County are now threatened.

I am in support of a categorical exclusion from the NEPA process which would streamline the authorization of invasive species treatment on federal land. I encourage the use of appropriate language in the Farm Bill to address the need for a categorical exclusion for pest prevention activities on federal land. The Farm Bill should also authorize adequate funding for the treatment of noxious weeds. The time has come for federal agencies to be responsible for, and good stewards of the land they own.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Griffin
Agricultural Commissioner and Sealer of Weights and Measures